

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.1 Existing Conditions

4.1.1 Regional Setting

The Ponto Area is located within the City of Carlsbad, California in northwestern San Diego County, just west of Interstate 5 (I-5), approximately 35 miles from downtown San Diego. The City is bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west; the City of Oceanside to the north and northeast; the Cities of Vista, San Marcos, and an unincorporated portion of San Diego County to the east and southeast; and, the City of Encinitas to the south. Regional access to the site is generally provided by I-5, which runs north-south and serves as a major transportation route from southern San Diego County to points northward such as Orange County and Los Angeles. Highway 78 (SR-78) runs east-west near the northern boundary of Carlsbad and provides access to the communities of Vista and San Marcos, Interstate 15 (I-15), and other communities within eastern San Diego County.

This region experiences generally mild seasons with a temperate climate typical of a coastal community. Temperatures average 58 degrees in January and 73 degrees in July with an average rainfall of approximately 10 inches.

This region is generally characterized by residential and commercial development, with some recreational uses and small-scale agricultural operations interspersed. Points of interests within the City include South Carlsbad State Beach, just to the west of the Ponto Area, the Carlsbad Flower Fields, and Legoland.

4.1.2 Local Setting

The approximately 130.4-acre Ponto Beachfront Village Vision Plan Area is located within the City of Carlsbad, just east of the Pacific Ocean and Carlsbad Boulevard, and west of the railroad line for the San Diego Northern Railroad. Poinsettia Lane forms the northern boundary of the study area, with La Costa Avenue forming the southern boundary. The study area is located in Sections 29, 32, and 33 of Township 12 South, Range 4 West on the San Bernardino Base and Meridian U.S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute Encinitas quadrangle map. The smaller 50-acre area proposed for development is generally bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Ponto Road to the north, the San Diego Northern Railroad line to the east, and Batiquitos Lagoon to the south.

Land uses to the north of the site consist of the Hanover Beach Colony residential neighborhood. Northeast of the site is Lakeshore Gardens, a mobile home park. The Poinsettia Shores residential area is located to the east of the site, with shopping and other services located along Avenida Encinas, to the east of the residential uses. Directly west of the Ponto Area on the oceanfront bluffs, adjacent to Carlsbad Boulevard, are the campsites of California's South Carlsbad State Beach, with the beach and Pacific Ocean below. The inflow/outflow channel for Batiquitos Lagoon is located along the southern portion of the Ponto Area.

Currently, access to the Ponto Area is provided by Carlsbad Boulevard, which runs north-south along the western portion of the project site. With implementation of the Vision Plan, three primary access points would lead into the Ponto Area from Carlsbad Boulevard: Ponto

Drive at the northern end of the site; Beach Way in the central portion; and Avenida Encinas at the southern end. Additionally, the existing Ponto Drive would facilitate internal circulation.

The 50-acre Ponto Area intended for future development consists mainly of “Developed” or “Disturbed” land. Several areas onsite have been previously graded. Approximately 24 structures exist in the Ponto Area and include approximately eleven onsite addresses. Structures range from one- to two-story structures in varying degrees of condition. Existing onsite uses include multiple light industrial uses (including a wood and sheet metal shop, an auto service/storage yard, wood chipping, a salvage yard, heating and air conditioning manufacturer), commercial uses (dog and cat kennel, storage facility, and an upholstery and antique store), residential uses, and vacant land. Historical uses within the subject site include, but are not limited to, metal shops, paint shops, antique repair, and mirror reconditioning facilities, dipping and stripping operations of materials, auto repair, metal fabrications, agricultural and residential uses.

A 572-foot long drainage averaging three feet wide originates east of Carlsbad Boulevard at Ponto Drive. The drainage runs to the south, through an undeveloped portion of the site, and connects to a drain that ultimately drains to the Pacific Ocean.

Topography in the Ponto Area is generally gently sloping, although there are several areas with greater elevational change. To the south of Avenida Encinas is a bluff that provides views of Batiquitos Lagoon and the Pacific Ocean. A high point occurs where Ponto Drive intersects Avenida Encinas. Lower elevations occur along Ponto Drive where the former off-ramps and underpass for Old Highway 101 were located. Elevations within the study area range from 0 to approximately 60 feet amsl; onsite topography ranges from approximately 30 to 70 feet amsl. In the northern portion of the site, drainage is generally to the south/southwest, towards the existing drainage; areas south of the drainage generally drain to the northeast towards the existing drainage. The southern portion of the site generally drains to the southwest, and ultimately to the Batiquitos Lagoon.

The Ponto Area is located on a westerly sloping series of well-defined coastal terraces above the Pacific Ocean. A small terrace occurs north of the mouth of the lagoon on the east side of Carlsbad Boulevard within the study area. Soils onsite are generally Quaternary Terrace Deposits that generally consist of moderately consolidated, poorly indurated clean sands, silty sands and clayey sands. Four soil types occur within the study area: Coastal beaches (Cr); Marina loamy coarse sand (MIC), 2 to 9 percent slopes; Marina loamy coarse sand (MIE), 9 to 30 percent slopes; and, Terrace escarpments. Portions of the Ponto Area also support Land Derived Fill and Hydraulic Fill resulting from engineered fills associated with former railroad and area roadway improvements, as well as dredging operations within the Batiquitos Lagoon.

Fourteen vegetative communities as well as disturbed habitat and developed land were identified within the study area and include: 0.98 acre of southern coastal salt marsh, 0.17 acre of riparian woodland, 0.91 acre of southern willow scrub, 0.19 acre of mule fat scrub, 2.21 acres of coastal and valley freshwater marsh, 1.30 acres of marine, 0.03 acre of mud flat, 0.11 acre of disturbed wetlands, 4.3 acres of southern coastal bluff scrub (including disturbed), 25.4 acres of beach/coastal dunes, 5.2 acres of Diegan coastal sage scrub (including disturbed), 0.2 acre of non-native grassland, 0.3 acre of eucalyptus woodland, 24.6

acres of disturbed habitat, 21.0 acres of non-native vegetation, and 43.4 acres of developed land.

4.1.3 Regulatory Status

Currently, the following General Plan designations apply to the Ponto Area: UA – Unplanned Area; TR/C – Travel/Recreation Commercial; RMH – Residential Medium High (8–15 dwelling units/acre); RMH/TR – a dual designation indicating that with further planning, one or both uses may be appropriate; and, OS – Open Space and Community Parks. The project would require a General Plan Amendment to designate the Ponto Area as an area of “Special Planning Consideration” that would require the Ponto Area to be developed under the guidance of the Ponto Beachfront Village Vision Plan; refer to Table 3-1. Future development proposals within the Ponto Area may be required to propose General Plan and Local Coastal Program land use reclassifications and Local Coastal Program zone changes that will be evaluated as part of the discretionary approval process. Amendments to the LMFPs for Zones 9 and 22 may also be required to update the documents as development of individual properties within the Ponto Area occurs over time. The Ponto Beachfront Village Vision Plan provides a guide for development of the area to ensure that future land uses are compatible and consistent with the intended vision for the site.

At present, there are three City zoning designations for the various parcels in the Ponto Area. These designations include: PC – Planned Community; CT-Q – Commercial Tourist zone with Qualified Development Overlay; RD-M-Q – Residential Density – Multiple zone with Qualified Development Overlay; and, CT-Q/RD-M-Q – a dual designation indicating that with further planning, one or both uses may be appropriate. No changes to the existing zoning are proposed with the project.

The Ponto Area is also affected by other plans and policies as described below. Project implementation will require action on both a plan-wide basis and on individual parcels planned for specific projects.

4.1.3.1 South Carlsbad Coastal Redevelopment Area (SCCRA)

As mentioned, a portion of the Ponto Area is located within the South Carlsbad Coastal Redevelopment Area. This portion of the site is therefore subject to the Redevelopment Permit process, which is administered by the City of Carlsbad’s Housing and Redevelopment Department; refer to Figure 3-3.

4.1.3.2 Local Coastal Program (LCP)

The Ponto Area falls within the state Coastal Zone. The City of Carlsbad’s Local Coastal Program (1996) is comprised of five segments, which provide policies and development guidelines for compliance with the State Coastal Act. The Ponto Area includes acreage located within the Mello II Segment Land Use Plan. Local Coastal Program Segments are required to maintain consistency with the City of Carlsbad’s General Plan. Implementation of the Vision Plan would require approval of an amendment to the LCP by the California Coastal Commission to ensure the LCP is consistent with the City’s General Plan and the Coastal Act.

4.1.3.3 Existing Specific Plans / Master Plans

Poinsettia Properties Specific Plan (SP 210)

The Poinsettia Properties Specific Plan directs development of a 92-acre transit-oriented residential community located primarily north of the Ponto Area; however, a 1.5-acre portion of the Ponto Area is included, referred to as Planning Area 1 in the Specific Plan. It is located in the northwest corner of the Ponto Area, adjacent to Carlsbad Boulevard and Ponto Road. Per the Specific Plan, the land use for this 1.5-acre area is intended for commercial uses that serve the traveling public and beach visitors.

Poinsettia Shores Master Plan (MP 175(c))

The Poinsettia Shores Master Plan area (PSMP), amended May 12, 1994, includes approximately 162.8 acres, of which approximately 23.5 acres are located within the Ponto Beachfront Village Vision Plan. The Poinsettia Shores Master Plan Area is broken down into 17 Planning Areas, three of which are located within the Ponto Area boundaries -- Areas F, G, and H. These areas feature travel service/commercial use, open space, and a non-residential reserve.

Local Facilities Management Plans (LFMP)

Local Facilities Management Plans address a development's demand on public services and facilities. The Ponto Area is located within the LFMPs for Zones 9 and 22. The proposed General Plan and Local Coastal Program amendments required for the project would not create any potential conflicts with the goals of these plans. Future development proposals would be required to demonstrate that proposed facilities are consistent with the LFMP or propose amendments to the appropriate LFMP to reflect resulting conditions.

Habitat Management Plan (HMP)

The Ponto Area lies within the North County Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) Subregional Plan area. The MHCP Subregional Plan was adopted and certified by the San Diego Association of Governments Board of Directors on March 28, 2003. Each of the seven jurisdictions within the MHCP area (including the City of Carlsbad) is required to implement their respective portion of the MHCP via citywide subarea plans. On November 15, 2004, the City of Carlsbad's Habitat Management Plan for Natural Communities in the City of Carlsbad (City HMP; 2004a) was approved, and state and federal permits were issued. A portion of the project site is located within Focused Planning Area (FPA) Core 8, which includes Batiquitos Lagoon. Batiquitos Lagoon is included in an existing Hardline Conservation Area.

The HMP includes goals and standards to guide conservation efforts in the development process within the City. These goals and policies are assigned within the individual LFMP zones; however, no conservation goals or standards are given for LFMP Zones 9 or 22, which are applicable to the project site. However, the City's HMP establishes zone-level recommendations for biological resource protection for each of the LFMP zones, such as the use of fencing or signage to minimize human disturbance to sensitive species. Proposed development within the Ponto Area would be designed to be consistent with the requirements of the City's HMP and Chapter 21.203.040(B)(3), Coastal Resources Protection Overlay Zone, of the Carlsbad Municipal Code as applicable. Refer to Section 5.2 of this EIR for additional information regarding the HMP.